

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BELGRADE 5020

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TAGS: OVIP (MARKOVIC, DRAGOSLAV) TO US
SUBJ: DRAGOSLAV MARKOVIC, PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL ASSEMBLY -
VISIT TO US JULY 16-22, 1978

1. FOLLOWING ARE OUR OBSERVATIONS ON MARKOVIC, FOR
USE IN PREPARING FOR HIS VISIT TO THE US.

2. MARKOVIC IS THE PRODUCT OF SEVERAL MAJOR INFLUENCES. HE
WAS BORN INTO A SERBIAN "PETIT BOURGEOIS" FAMILY; BOTH HIS
PARENTS WERE TEACHERS, APPARENTLY "PROGRESSIVE" IN THE
CONTEXT OF SERBIA BETWEEN WORLD WARS I AND II. HE ATTENDED
A GYMNASIUM WHERE HE LEARNED FRENCH (WHICH REMAINS HIS ONLY
FOREIGN LANGUAGE), AND WHERE HE BECAME INVOLVED IN LEFTIST
POLITICS. HE JOINED THE COMMUNIST YOUTH IN 1938 AT AGE 18.
MARKOVIC WENT "INTO THE WOODS" IN 1941, OPERATING AS AN
INCREASINGLY INFLUENTIAL PARTISAN LEADER IN THE AREA AROUND
BELGRADE.

3. MARKOVIC IS THUS A "1941 FIGHTER", ONE OF THE ELITE
5,000 WHO SURVIVED THE WAR. AS A POLITICAL COMMISSAR OF A
SMALL UNIT OPERATING IN HOSTILE TERRITORY THROUGHOUT THE
CONFLICT, HE PARTICIPATED DIRECTLY IN INNUMERABLE BLOOD
LETTINGS, SUFFERED WOUNDS, LOST MEMBERS OF HIS FAMILY,
AND EMERGED FROM THE WAR AS A SENIOR MEMBER OF THE
DREADED SECRET POLICE OZNA AND WITH A PROBABLY
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WELL DESERVED REPUTATION FOR RUTHLESSNESS. FOR NEARLY
TWENTY YEARS THEREAFTER, MARKOVIC HELD A NUMBER OF
SIGNIFICANT POSITIONS IN THE SERBIAN PARTY AND STATE
HIERARCHY, EXERCISING INFLUENCE NEAR BUT NOT AT THE TOP
OF THE YUGOSLAV POWER ESTABLISHMENT. HE THEN HAD A
SHORT STINT AS AMBASSADOR IN SOFIA (63-65), WHICH HE
REPORTEDLY DID NOT ENJOY. EXCEPT FOR THAT EXPERIENCE,

MARKOVIC SEEMS TO HAVE TRAVELED LITTLE OUTSIDE OF YUGOSLAVIA, AND NOT AT ALL IN THE WEST. UNTIL HE BECAME A MEMBER OF THE PRESIDENCY OF THE FEDERATION IN 1972, HE HAD HELD NO POSITIONS OF NOTE IN THE FEDERAL BUREAUCRACY EITHER. EVEN HIS POSITION ON THE PRESIDENCY WAS DUE TO HIS POSITION OF PRESIDENT OF THE SERBIAN REPUBLICAN ASSEMBLY.

4. AS CAN BE SEEN FROM THE ABOVE, MARKOVIC HAS NOT EXACTLY BEEN OVER EXPOSED TO WESTERN INFLUENCE. ALTHOUGH IN HIS PRESENT POSITION HE WILL SEE MUCH MORE OF THE WORLD, HIS VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES, COMING EARLY IN HIS ASSEMBLY PRESIDENCY, CAN AND SHOULD BE FOR HIM A REAL EYE OPENER.

5. MARKOVIC IS CONSISTENTLY DESCRIBED AS QUICK WITTED, A CONGENIAL IF WARY CONVERSATIONALIST, AND A STRONG DEFENDER OF (USUALLY CONSERVATIVE) PARTY POSITIONS. HE HAS NOT HAD MUCH EXPOSURE TO AMERICANS BUT CAN BE EXPECTED TO RESPOND WELL TO AMERICAN CANDOR, INFORMALITY -- WITHIN CERTAIN PROTOCOL LIMITS -- AND OPENNESS. THOSE MEETING MARKOVIC SHOULD BEAR IN MIND HIS DEEPLY INGRAINED SERBIANISM, HIS TOUGH PARTY ORIGINS, AND HIS LACK OF EXPOSURE TO THE WEST. AT THE SAME TIME, MARKOVIC SHOULD BE APPROACHED -- WITH DUE REGARD TO HIS PRESENT VERY SENIOR NATIONAL POSITION -- IN A DIRECT AND FRIENDLY FASHION. WE
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BELIVED HE WILL RESPOND.

6. IT SHOULD ALSO BE BORNE IN MIND THAT THE BODY OVER WHICH MARKOVIC NOW PRESIDES, THE FEDERAL ASSEMBLY, IS NOT THE RUBBER STAMP TRAVESTY OF A POTEMKIN PARLIAMENT FOUND IN COMMUNIST STATES DOMINATED BY THE SOVIET UNION. WHILE THE YUGOSLAV ASSEMBLY DOES NOT EXERCISE THE INFLUENCE OVER EXECUTIVE DECISION MAKING WHICH LEGISLATURES DO IN WESTERN DEMOCRACIES, IT DOES PLAY A MAJOR SUBSTANTIVE ROLE IN THE COUNTRY, ESPECIALLY IN DOMESTIC AFFAIRS. FURTHERMORE, MARKOVIC'S PROTOCOL POSITION IS SENIOR -- HE RANKS ABOVE PRIME MINISTER DJURANOVIC.

7. AS FOR MARKOVIC'S PERSONAL LIKES AND DISLIKES, ONE THING THAT COMES THROUGH CLEARLY IS HIS LONG STANDING AND FIERCE ATTACHMENT TO BELGRADE'S RED STAR FOOTBALL (SOCCER) TEAM. THIS YEAR RED STAR CAME IN SECOND IN THE YUGOSLAV FEDERAL LEAGUE, BUT THE TEAM HAS A NEW COACH AND BETTER THINGS ARE HOPED FOR NEXT YEAR. OTHERWISE, HE IS A CHAIN SMOKER AND DOES NOT REFUSE A COGNAC IN THE MORNING.

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